

APRIL FOOLS OF TODAY AND YESTERDAY



"Sometimes the Too-knowing Person Proves the Greatest April Fool of All."

FROM mythological times, when merry lambs were sent with Ceres on a vain hunt for Prosperpine, clear down through the days of the witty Stuart-fools to the routine tricks of today, April Fool's day has been given over to queer antics and the perpetration of jokes at the expense of another. In every language, April first is named for the equivalent of "fool."

At one period it was strictly pagan; at another somewhat mixed up with certain observances of the Christian church; and today it is celebrated chiefly by juveniles and rustics. At its inception it was rather the higher stratum of society that annually celebrated it. Believing that since every god and saint had a "day," so should every fool—or jester—royal courts designated that day coming on April first in the modern calendar as All Fools' Day and during those twenty-four hours reversed all usual procedure.

In France the Court Jester was an important personage. He was the means of enlivening so many—other weary hours that monarchs showed him a debt of gratitude. On his day he and his kind were elevated to the throne, and the King and Queen stood at the foot and paid him court. His fool's "bauble" was regarded as the rank of kingly office and any mandate he issued—short of power over life and death—was obeyed. And it is said, sometimes a foolish ruler received a much needed lesson from the orders of his jester.

Modern France rather inclines to circuses and gay outdoor performances on April first. Through the provinces little two-wheeled carts journey to hamlets where any entertainment is a novelty. From the tailboard a regulation jester, in tight-fitting fleshings, peaked cap with bells and his "bauble" in his hand, gives a characteristic performance. A favorite diversion is to pause suddenly amid a serious talk and give a smart blow with his stick to some one in the audience; or to rap out a witticism at the expense of a listener; or best of all, to offer free sweetmeats and then go into paroxysms of mirth at the

deceived ones who bite into a concoction of chocolate and raw cotton.

In England the populace always has a Morris dance on April Fool's Day in which everybody hilariously participates. A feature of it is the "ring-around-a-rosy," with the typical fool arrayed in lights, or tight trousers, fool's cap and bearing an inflated bladder on a stick, holding hands with a "Betsey" of the dairy maid type. In the Middle Ages in England it was considered great sport to send persons on a "wild-goose chase" after a "second edition of Cock Robin" or a "bit o' porth of crocodile quills," or the "History of Eve's Mother." In 1872 a writer there tells how it was the custom for boys to cry out "Ah, you April Fools!" and how, seventy years before that, it was customary to say "Sir, your shoe is unbuckled." A choice witicism was perpetrated by remarking "Excuse me, but there's something on your face." "What?" inquires the victim. "Your nose, Ha! Ha!"

In the North of England April Fools are still called "gowks, or gowks"—that being the name for cuckoo, which commonly means "fool." This probably is similar to the German, gock—signifying the same stupidity—and explains why when a maiden of the Fatherland first hears the voice of a cuckoo on April Fool night she kisses her hand in the direction of the bird and asks when she will marry. As many times as the cuckoo or geck replies immediately following her question is supposed to signify the number of months to elapse before she is wed. In Scotland the people have an April Fool custom of "hunting the gowk." This consists of sending people on a long despairing chase after a letter which, when finally located, reads "go hunt the gowk about another mile." The victim is told that a certain person has a note for him. He goes in search of it, only to be informed the missive has been handed to someone living farther on to be given to him.

The French call the person imposed upon on April Fool's Day a "poisson d'Avril," or mackerel, which is a very stupid fish and one easily caught. The Spanish call them "Innocents." But,



"A Regulation Jester Gives a Characteristic Performance."

whatever the title, they are treated with about equal heartlessness. In every land—even the usually polite Oriental indulging, from long before the Birth of Christ, in this annual form of diversion.

And, strangely, in no matter what era, country, or tongue the day has been recognized it has always come on what exactly corresponds with our first of April.

The Chinese account for the origin of All Fools' Day by a fable handed down from the mazes of antiquity. According to this, a certain great prince had the misfortune to offend an enchanter, but also obtained the protection of a fairy. When his son grew up and succeeded to the throne the enchanter and fairy fought for the possession of the prince.

The fairy turned her enemy first into a rock and then into a stream of water. This torrent swept over the prince and carried him away a distance of two miles where a sunken lake was created. It was named "the pool of Iscamma," in honor of the prince and a yearly festival in his memory was instituted. Gradually, on that day, it became the custom to send persons "to find Iscamma," or to search in vain. This event, supposed to have been dated April Fool's Day, is ascribed to the tale of Chienkook, on the seventh of the moon of Niada—which in the European calendar makes April first.

Yet, perhaps, from amid the numerous origins put forth by various races the most plausible—because it seems to find confirmation by every Occidental writer on the subject—is that it was celebrated first as the final day of the octave forming the Roman New Year. With all pagans every



A Typical English "Fool" and His "Betsey."

important festival lasted for eight days, the first and last being the most significant. Now, the year with the Romans was ushered in on what is now March 25th and the feasting ended on April first. Also, there was much in the nature of the celebration to link it with modern All Fools' Day. The entire last day was given over to "fool-making" of a nature very similar to that with which the American small boy fools his contemporaries. It was called "Kalendarum," and came in their January calendar. The public rejoicing of the Gentiles at this time was adopted by the Chris-



"The King and Queen Stood at the Foot and Paid Him Court."

waters had receded, on the first day of the month among the Hebrews that corresponds with the initial day of our fourth month.

A German writer—in whose country this venerable old custom is firmly established—gives one of the most sensible of theories when he claims that April itself is the fool month, with her deceitful and varying weather. "One goes forth in the sunshine for a walk," he says, "only to be April-fooled and come home in a deluge of rain. April's quick recurring sun-smiles being her woman's laughter at people's confiding folly."

Sweden is to American minds so peopled with grave, serious folk that indulgence in the droll horse-play of the first of April seems hardly fitting. Yet that land has to its April Fool credit one of the most ingeniously tormenting ceremonies of the day. It is thought extremely funny to stand at an upper, open window with a bucket of water and a pall of ashes in readiness. As some especially well-dressed "fool" approaches he is given enough of the water to cause him, instinctively, to look up; immediately a handful of ashes is received in his eyes and all over his fine raiment.

Strangest of all, in tracing the course of the April Fool joke and the joker down through the world, is to learn that the studiously polite and dignified Hindoo has numbered such a celebration among those of his country from time immemorial. Every year a great feast is held in all India which corresponds exactly with the features of our April first and falls on the same date.

This is called the "Feast of the Huli" and during its observance mirth and jokes are rampant. There are the same useless errands, the fake letter and deceiving edibles and many hoaxes possessing a uniqueness of conception beyond the Occidental mind to invent. As a rule the lower classes are most pleased by these ceremonies, though every grade of society observes the feast and Surajah Dowlat, whose Indian name has been Anglicized into Sir Roger Doolittle, loved to make "Huli Fools" of his friends.

About the most gigantic April Fool

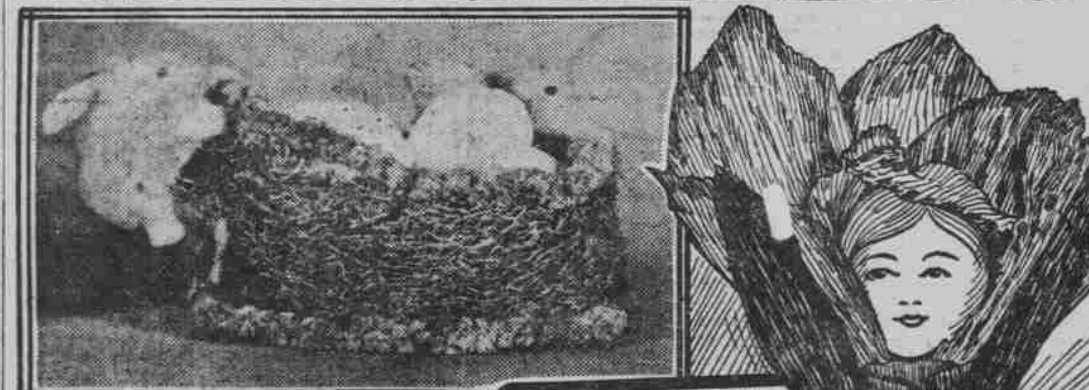
joke on record was perpetrated on citizens of London in the year of 1860. During the latter part of March a vast number of people received, in their morning mail, cards bearing what appeared to be an official stamp but was really wax impressed with a sixpence turned upside down. It read: "Tower of London—Admit bearer to view the annual Ceremony of Washing the White Lions, on Sunday, April 1st, 1860. Admitted only at the White Gate. It is particularly requested that no gratuity be given any of the Wardens or their Assistants."

The stolid English got up before daybreak to be in time for the remarkable performance. They hadn't the slightest idea what it meant, but that only whetted their curiosity the more. All day long, cabs and carriages were rattling over the stones around Tower Hill searching for the White Gate. Of course there wasn't any such gate and gradually the victims realized that they had been offered up on the altar of April Fool's Day.

So much for the fools of yesterday. Nobody could convince the average small boy that his stratagems of April first ever were or will be surpassed. He ties his trick purse across the pavement and wriggles with glee when a pompous grown-up stoops for it. He runs off with a sagging gate from some dilapidated yard and hangs it on the imposing iron fence of a splendid mansion. He wets flour and throws it on pedestrians, rings door bells and grows hoarse from frequent repetitions of "Say! Mister, you dropped your handkerchief," or "You lost your pocketbook."

But things really have a way of getting lost on April first as well as on any other day of the calendar. And sometimes the too-knowing person proves the greatest April Fool of all. Occasionally a small boy shouts to a man that the latter has dropped his purse; the man nods comprehendingly but goes on leaving his wallet to be picked up later by one who proves a theory of Confucius which reads "From a fool the wise can often learn wisdom."

THE EASTER EGG



Raffia Basket with Eggs and Rabbits

counts himself friendless who does not receive dozens of these tokens. The Roumanians use great quantities of eggs, but there is a certain sameness in their decorations. They are either white decorations on a red ground or red on a white ground and they are all, or very nearly all, geometric designs.

The hare or the rabbit is celebrated for its fertility and because it was a favorite of the goddess Aphrodite, hence "bunny" is seen in one guise or another on most Easter offerings. In Germany it is the universal custom to hide baskets of eggs about the house and garden and then all the family begins the search for them before breakfast. In every basket there is sure to be a rabbit and the fun is enjoyed by all.

In France the Poisson d'Avril, or April fish, does not supplant the egg, but takes its place proudly beside it. Originally the April fish was one of the April fool customs of France; it is still, in fact, but as the first of April is certain to come sometime in Lent, this toy has to belong to Easter almost as much as the egg.

That English children are more fond of the "lollipop egg" filled with sweets than of any other, the following lines declare:

"At Easter we get a fine egg for the nonce,

But 'tis naught but shell and color and I'd greatly prefer the confectioner's thing.

The egg that is fashioned of lollipop stuff."

The Persians use colored eggs in large quantities on their New Year's



Decorated with Decalcomania Pictures

Day, as that is their great festival.

To make any of the Easter novelties the egg must first be boiled hard, or the shell emptied. The blowing of an egg is a simple matter if one has a glass or brass blow-pipe, such as is used by egg collectors.

If the blow-pipe is not available a pin hole at each end will answer very well, but one must be careful not to hold the egg too tightly or it will crush in the hands.

Fresh eggs that will sink in water are the best for blowing. When the contents are out it is well to rinse the egg and then let it dry before decorating. Then there will be no trouble with them. No decoration

will adhere well if they are not made free of any foreign matter.

After the shells of the eggs have been cleaned immerse them in hot water and take a little tube such as confectioners use to decorate their cakes with, or if that is not to be had a tallow candle will do and write names and dates, etc. The warmth of the egg makes this an easy matter.

Put the eggs into a pan of cochineal or other dye. The part inscribed will remain white, while the egg takes on the coloring matter.

Another method is to color the entire egg and etch inscriptions, etc., with a pen-knife, scraping off the dye. The tulip-egg is rather more elaborate,

but it is so pretty that it quite pays for the extra trouble. For this is needed some crinkly green paper and some white and pieces of fine wire.

When the shell is emptied put the wire into the egg, securing it firmly, using warm wax. Mark a child's face on the upper end with pen and ink, or cut one out of a picture if preferred. Then cut ten leaves of the white paper and splash them along the edges and occasionally into the leaf with red; water color is best, but red ink will do if nothing better is at hand.

Arrange them quite irregularly around the egg, as tulips are set, the wax being soft and warm will hold

them in place. Then cut two long green leaves; wrap the wire with a strip of green and put on the two leaves an inch or two apart.

These make admirable name cards for Easter luncheons or dinners; so does the Chinese Mandarin, made as follows: Mark the slanting eyes and oriental features with pen and ink on a yellow shell. Make a hat of crinoline covered with black silk or with pen and ink, putting a red tassel and button in the center of the crown. Braid strands of coarse linen thread into a pigtail two or two and one-half inches long and fasten with paste or glue to the top of the head. When this is dry fasten the cap in place with a drop of glue and last of all set the Mandarin in the middle of a nest of frilled white papers.

Mark the features of an old woman on another shell; a strip of frilled paper will make her cap, which with a three-cornered bit of plaid wrapped about the shoulders will give you a capital old woman.

Other fascinating doll eggs are made by combining paper heads and arms into egg shell bodies. Empty the shells by making a small hole in each end and blowing out the contents. With sharp knife or scissors cut off one end, so that the shell will stand on the cut edges. This will be for a doll without skirts. Another variety may be made by setting the point

of the egg into hot sealing wax placed in the middle of a square cardboard. Pretty coats and dress skirts are made of frilled tissue paper all fastened on with glue or paste. The features may be made to represent any nationality and an old man with a pipe is as fascinating as grotesque.

A Humpty-Dumpty doll egg is perhaps the easiest one to make, as it will not tax the ingenuity of the veriest amateur. Mark the familiar features with ink and cover the head with a fantastic crown; do this with ink also. Cover five bits of wire with flesh-colored crinkly paper and put them through two holes at the side which you have made previously and bend to suit the angle of an arm. Now separate the ends from the arm and fasten the paper ends with paste. Proceed in the same way for the feet and arrange the wires at such an angle as will enable the egg-doll to stand alone.

Plain papier-mache eggs for holding small gifts and candies may be bought in the shops and decorated at home with a brush or decalcomanie pictures, which transfer without trouble and are a never ending source of delight to those who cannot work with a brush and paints.

Many of the novelties shown in the shops may be made at home by clever fingers that are good at imitating things. For instance, a tiny round basket made of twigs is gilded with splashes of gold or silver paint. It is filled with sugar eggs and is presided over by a small cotton flannel rabbit, who is secured to the rim of the basket.

Another basket is made in the shape of a shoe of colored raffia with a chenille cord outlining at top and bottom. A pair of yellow chickens and a pink-eyed rabbit keep watch and ward over the Easter eggs within.

A third basket in the shape of a loving cup is made of pasteboard, covered with green paper and lined with pink. A tiny chick is perched on each handle. Both chickens and rabbits may be bought ready made in the shops if one cares to shirk a portion of the work.

For suspending the eggs upon which faces, figures and inscriptions have been done with pen and ink make the hole at the top large enough to introduce a match; break off the sulphur end and tie a bit of thread tightly around the center and then slip it into the hole longitudinally, being very careful not to lose the ends of the thread nor to break the shell. Once the match is inside it will right itself with a little manipulation and the ribbons for suspension are easily attached by using the threads. An infinite variety may be made in this manner.